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THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

Leaflet No. 19

John Bunyan

By

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October, 1911

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JOHN BUNYAN¹

THE *Pilgrim's Progress* is so closely related to the life of Bunyan that it is impossible to appreciate the one without some knowledge of the other. How was it, one naturally asks, that a man of little education could produce two centuries ago a masterpiece which is still read wherever the English language is spoken, and has been translated into every European tongue? It is not sufficient to answer that the author of the work was a genius: it is necessary to show what the conditions were which enabled his genius to develop itself, led him to find the form of expression which best suited its character, and secured for what it produced both immediate popularity and lasting fame.

Bunyan belonged to a family of Bedfordshire peasants which can be traced back for many generations in local records, and the theory that he was of gipsy descent has long been disproved. His father, Thomas Bunyan, was a tinker, or, as he calls himself in his will, 'a brasier.' He is described by one of the biographers of his son as 'an honest, poor labouring man, who, like Adam unparadised, had all the world before him to get his bread in, and was very careful to maintain his family.' John, who was the eldest son of Thomas Bunyan, was baptized in Elstow Church on November 30, 1628. Poor though his parents were, says he, 'it pleased God to put into their hearts to put me to school to learn both to read and write; the which I also attained according to the rate of other poor men's children; though to my shame I confess I did soon lose that little I learnt, even almost utterly.' His school days were over and he was beginning to learn his father's trade when the civil war began. He joined the parliamentary army, not as a volunteer, but as one of the young men whom Bedfordshire, like other counties under the Parliament's control, was ordered to impress for military service. His name appears in the muster roll of a regiment forming part of the garrison of Newport Pagnell in November 1644, when he was just sixteen years old, and he served there till the end of May 1645, and perhaps a few months longer.²

As he was present with his company at Newport on May 27, 1645, the story that he fought at the siege of Leicester must be definitely abandoned, for the king began the investment of that town on May 28.

In 1647 at the latest Bunyan's military service ended. He had seen something of a soldier's life in a frontier garrison, but can have taken part in no fighting more serious than a trifling skirmish, or possibly the siege of some fortified house. But it must have enlarged the home-bred country boy's knowledge of men and manners, and what-

¹ Originally printed in 1898 as an introduction to an edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress* published by Messrs. Methuen & Co., and now reprinted by their permission.

² This fact was discovered by Mr. E. G. Atkinson of the Public Record Office, who found there some muster-rolls proving it. See *Notes and Queries*, July 18, 1896.

ever he saw and learnt remained in his mind, and was put to good use when he came to describe the character of a Puritan soldier in the person of Mr. Great-heart, and the vicissitudes of a besieged town in the history of the City of Mansoul. He returned to his trade, married about the year 1649 a woman of his own rank whose name is unknown, and set up housekeeping at Elstow. 'This woman and I,' says he, 'came together as poor as might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both.' But she brought with her two books: *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*, by Arthur Dent, and Bishop Bayly's *Practice of Piety*. These books they sometimes read together, 'wherein,' he tells us, 'I found some things that were not displeasing to me.' In his younger days Bunyan had been, according to his own account, careless and vicious. 'I had but few equals, especially considering my years, both for cursing, lying and blaspheming. . . . I was the very ringleader of all the youth that kept me company, in all manner of vice and ungodliness.' Yet even then his imagination was sensitive to supernatural visitings. He was scared at times by fearful dreams and dreadful visions, and afflicted with apprehensions of devils. On his marriage he became a reformed and an outwardly religious man. He felt 'some desires to religion', he went to church twice a Sunday, became 'overrun with the spirit of superstition', and began to reverence both the church itself and the clergyman who ministered there with great devotion. 'My neighbours did take me to be a very godly man, a new and religious man, and did much marvel to see such a great and famous alteration in my life and manners.' But while others thought him one of the elect his mind was distracted by doubt and despondency, he doubted the reality of his conversion, the certainty of his election and salvation. 'I began to sink greatly in my soul, and began to entertain such discouragement in my heart as laid me as low as Hell. . . . I fell at the sight of my own vileness deeply into despair; for I concluded that this condition I was in could not stand with a state of grace. Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God; sure I am given up to the Devil and to a reprobate mind. And thus I continued a long while, even for some years together.' He read the Bible diligently, and at times found comfort in it. More often 'fearful scriptures' would strike him down as dead, and ring in his ears for days together. He read religious treatises too; some of the books of the Ranters which religious friends recommended to him fell into his hands, but they gave no light, but fresh doubts. Another book he lighted on was the story of Francis Spira—an apostate Protestant—which 'was to my troubled spirit as salt when rubbed into a fresh wound'. Chance at last threw into his hands Martin Luther's commentary on the Galatians, in which, says he, 'I found my condition so largely and profoundly handled as if his book had been written out of my heart. . . .' It seemed to him of all the books he had ever seen, the most fit for a wounded conscience. Much, too, was he helped and comforted by the teaching of John Gifford—the minister of an Independent congregation which had St. John's Church at Bedford for its meeting-place. Bunyan was formally received as a member of this church in 1653. Gifford's doctrine, he says, 'by God's grace was much for my stability'; it was 'as seasonable to my soul as the former and the latter rain in their season'. His troubles were not yet ended, but by slow degrees

his mind grew less perturbed and he passed from darkness and terror to peace and light.

In Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, which he published in 1666, he told the story of his spiritual life with a minuteness that strangely contrasts with his reticence about those outward things on which most modern autobiographies dilate.

He writes as a man to whom the little world within is the only real world, and the great one without something unsubstantial and visionary. *Grace Abounding* is the best preface to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the best comment upon it. Bunyan's allegory is the generalization of his own experiences, shadowing the incidents of his own history. The elements of the *Pilgrim's Progress* are in the earlier work, waiting for the moment which is to combine them into an allegorical story. Its style has the same qualities. There is the strong, simple, homely diction, sometimes touched with imagination, and always full of passionate sincerity. There is the same vivid realization of things unseen, which is already becoming a tendency to give concrete form to the promptings of the heart and the abstractions of the brain. Bunyan's struggles with temptation are pictured as struggles with a corporeal tempter, audible and visible. At one time he describes himself as 'much followed by this scripture, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you,"' and 'sometimes it would sound so loud within me, yea, call so strongly after me, that once above all the rest I turned my head over my shoulder, thinking that verily some man behind me called me'. At times as he prayed, 'I have thought I felt the devil behind me pulling my clothes; he would also be continually at me in the time of prayer to have done: "Break off, make haste, you have prayed long enough, stay no longer."' Worst of all was the voice that cried in his ear, 'Sell Christ for this or that.' 'This temptation did put me into such fears that by the very force of my imagination in labouring to gainsay and resist this wickedness my very body would be put into action, by way of pushing or thrusting with my hands or elbows, still answering as fast as the destroyer said, "Sell Him."' And again, when the temptation is conquered, he says, 'Methought I saw as if the tempter did leer and steal away from me, as being ashamed of what he had done.' Bunyan's hopes took the same distinct and concrete form to his mind's eye. 'Now had I an evidence, as I thought, of my salvation from heaven, with many golden seals thereon all hanging in my sight. . . . My understanding was so enlightened that I was as though I had seen the Lord Jesus look down from heaven through the tiles upon me, and direct these words unto me.' His natural instinct was to express each change of feeling, each vicissitude in his spiritual conflict, in figurative or metaphorical form. In his despair his tumultuous thoughts 'like masterless hell hounds roar and bellow within him', his soul was 'like a broken vessel driven as with the winds'. To describe his despondency, he employs the very image he subsequently uses to depict Christian's experiences in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and likens himself to a child that has fallen into a pool, or a horse stuck fast in the mire and struggling to reach firm ground.

The instinct which made Bunyan seek to realize his mental conceptions of the spiritual world in the most visible and tangible shape, and to express each vicissitude in his religious experience in a simile

or a figure, led him naturally towards allegory. In the verses in which he explains the origin of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, he says :

Thus it was : I writing of the Way
And Race of Saints, in this our Gospel-day,
Fell suddenly into an Allegory
About their Journey, and the way to Glory.

So now in *Grace Abounding* Bunyan, comparing his forlorn condition with the lot of those happy in their certain faith, 'fell suddenly into an allegory.'

'About this time, the state and happiness of these poor people at Bedford was thus, in a dream or Vision, prescribed to me. I saw as if they were set on the Sunny side of some high Mountain, there refreshing themselves with the pleasant beams of the Sun, while I was shivering and shrinking in the Cold, afflicted with Frost, Snow, and dark Clouds. Methought, also, betwixt me and them, I saw a wall that did compass about this mountain ; now, through this wall my soul did greatly desire to pass ; concluding, that if I could, I would go even into the midst of them, and there also comfort myself with the heat of their Sun.

'About this wall I thought myself to go again and again, still prying as I went, to see if I could find some way or passage, by which I might enter therein ; but none could I find for some time. At the last, I saw, as it were, a narrow gap, like a little doorway in the Wall, through which I attempted to pass. Now the passage being very strait and narrow, I made many efforts to get in, but all in Vain, even until I was well nigh quite beat out, by striving to get in. At last, with great striving, methought I at first did get in my head, and after that, by a sidling striving, my shoulders and my whole Body. Then I was exceeding glad, and went and sat down in the midst of them, and so was comforted with the light and heat of their Sun.

'Now, this Mountain and Wall, &c., was thus made out to me—the Mountain signified the Church of the living God ; the Sun that shone thereon, the comfortable shining of his merciful Face on them that were therein ; the wall, I thought, was the Word, that did make separation between the Christians and the World ; and the Gap which was in this Wall, I thought, was Jesus Christ, who is the way to God the Father. But forasmuch as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could not, but with great difficulty, enter in thereat, it showed me that none could enter into Life, but those that were in downright earnest, and unless also they left this wicked World behind them ; for here was only room for Body and Soul, but not for Body and Soul and Sin.

'This resemblance abode upon my Spirit many days.'

Many years were yet to pass before Bunyan would make a similar resemblance the groundwork of a story presenting not merely his own experience, but the general experience of all seekers after righteousness. In the meantime the training he went through tended to fit him for the task towards which his natural bent led him. Assiduous reading of the Bible and of the few religious books he possessed had been to him a new education, which replaced the little school learning he had forgotten. Assiduous preaching and controversial writing completed the process. Some two years or so after he joined Mr. Gifford's congregation, brethren who had discovered his gift of utterance, pressed him to exhort the rest in their private meetings, and 'with much

weakness and infirmity' he obeyed their desire. Urged by them, he began to exhort more publicly, and at last, about 1656, he tells us, 'being still desired by the church, I was more particularly called forth and appointed to a more ordinary and public preaching the Word, not only to and amongst them that believed, but also to offer the Gospel to those who had not yet received the faith thereof.' Besides the desire of the church, he felt in his own mind 'a secret pricking thereto'. Conscious that he had a gift, he could not be content unless he exercised it. 'Wherefore,' he says, 'though of all the Saints the most unworthy, yet I, but with great fear and trembling at the sight of my own weakness, did set upon the work, and did according to my gift and the proportion of my faith preach that blessed Gospel that God had showed me.' Soon from all parts of the country round men came to hear him in hundreds, and some were touched and greatly affected in their minds. Ministers of the established church warned people against 'the wandering preaching tinker'. Quakers controverted him, he was derided and slandered, but nothing could break the spell which he cast over those who heard him. The secret of his eloquence was its passion and its sincerity. 'I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel. . . . I carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to beware of. . . . 'I have been in my preaching as if an angel of God had stood at my back to encourage me. . . . 'I could not be contented with saying, *I believe and am sure*, methought I was more than sure that those things which I then asserted were true.'

In 1660 the Restoration came, and the forcible suppression of non-conformity began. On November 12, 1660, Bunyan was arrested at a hamlet in Bedfordshire just as he was about to begin to preach. 'At the sessions,' he relates, 'I was indicted for an upholder and maintainer of unlawful conventicles, and for not conforming to the national worship of the Church of England; and after some conference there with the judges, they taking my plain dealing with them for a confession of my indictment, did sentence me to a perpetual imprisonment because I refused to conform.' He not only refused to conform, but refused to give up preaching. A friend argued with him, that the powers that be were ordained of God, and that therefore it was his duty to obey the law. 'Sir,' said Bunyan, 'the law hath provided two ways of obeying. The one is to do that which I in my conscience do believe that I am bound to do actively, and where I cannot obey actively there I am willing to lie down, and to suffer what they shall do unto me.'

For the next twelve years Bunyan was a prisoner in the county gaol at Bedford. In 1666 he is said to have been released for a short time, but if so he was speedily re-arrested. Towards the close of his imprisonment its rigour was considerably relaxed, for from August 1668 he was able occasionally to attend the meetings of his congregation, and his name is frequently mentioned in its records. On January 21, 1672, while still a prisoner, he was elected to be its minister, having been hitherto merely one of its deacons and an occasional preacher. During his confinement he maintained himself and his family by making laces, and perhaps also by some other handicraft. 'I have been witness,' writes a friend, 'that his own hands have ministered to his and his families necessities, making many hundred gross of long

tagged laces to fill up the vacancies of his time, which he had learned for that purpose since he had been in prison.' He also wrote much. Four works from Bunyan's pen were published between 1656 and 1660, and eleven others appeared between 1661 and 1672. One was a curious 'map showing the causes of Salvation and Damnation'. Four of them were verse compositions, viz., *Profitable Meditations*, *Prison Meditations*, *Ebal and Gerizim*, and *The Four Last Things*. Of the prose works, *Grace Abounding*, published in 1666, was the most important. The friend who visited Bunyan in prison describes him as having with him there 'his library, the least and yet the best that ever I saw, consisting only of two books—a Bible and the *Book of Martyrs*'. The copy of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, which Bunyan bought during his imprisonment, is now in the library of the Literary and Scientific Institute at Bedford. It contains some doggerel verses on the margins which Southey and other biographers have attributed to Bunyan himself, but they are in the handwriting of one of the later owners of the book. Southey is nevertheless right in saying that Bunyan learnt to versify from Foxe. His earliest verses, and especially his *Prison Meditations*, closely resemble both in metre and style 'the godly letter of Master Robert Smith in metre', which Foxe inserts in his account of the sufferings of the martyrs of Mary's reign. And the farewell speeches of the martyrs to their friends before they passed through the fire, probably suggested the similar utterances of Bunyan's pilgrims before they passed through the river. The influence of Foxe over Bunyan is further attested by the fact that he is frequently quoted in Bunyan's religious treatises, and is indeed the only author so quoted.

In 1672 Charles II, desirous of winning support for the war against the Dutch, changed his policy towards the English Nonconformists, and published on March 15, 1672, his Declaration of Indulgence. On May 8, Bunyan and his fellow prisoners at Bedford petitioned for their release, and on September 13, 1672, he received with many others a pardon under the Great Seal. He had obtained his freedom, however, some months before this formal pardon was granted, and on May 9, 1672, he was given a licence to preach either in the house of Josias Ruffhead at Bedford, which was the meeting-place of his little congregation, or in any other licensed building. Ruffhead's house, or rather his barn, and the orchard in which it stood, were conveyed to Bunyan and his congregation in August 1672, and the present Bunyan Meeting at Bedford now stands upon its site.

This respite from persecution was only temporary. Parliament obliged Charles II to annul his Declaration of Indulgence within a year of its promulgation, and the toleration it had guaranteed came to an end. In 1675, probably towards the end of the year, Bunyan was again imprisoned, and remained a prisoner till the spring of the following year. This time the place of his confinement was the town gaol of Bedford, which stood on the bridge over the Ouse, and served the double purpose of a prison and a toll-house. The gaol on the bridge was 'the den' to which Bunyan refers, in the opening lines of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, as the place in which he laid himself down to sleep and dreamed his dream. Dr. John Brown—the last and best of Bunyan's biographers—has proved the time and the circumstances under which the composition of the *Pilgrim's Progress* was begun by

an ingenious and convincing series of arguments. Bunyan occupied himself during the first part of his imprisonment by writing a catechism entitled, *Instruction for the Ignorant*, which he dedicated to his congregation at Bedford. In the preface to this work, which was published in 1675, he describes himself as 'being driven from you in presence, not affection', obviously alluding in these words to his confinement. He then began a discourse called 'The Strait Gate, or the great difficulty of going to heaven, plainly proving by the Scriptures, that not only the rude and profane, but many great professors will come short of that kingdom'. After dwelling on the narrowness of the gate, Bunyan enumerated the different kinds of professing Christians who would seek to enter by it and would be unable, and characterized them one by one. As he wrote a new idea flashed across his mind. He would write not a treatise only but a story, not of the gate only but of the road, with all its difficulties and perils, representing not merely pretended saints, but honest wayfarers on their journey 'from this world to that which is to come'.

Such is the account of the origin of the *Pilgrim's Progress* given by Bunyan himself in the rough verses prefixed to it, if we interpret them by the light of the contents and history of the *Strait Gate*. When I began to write this, says Bunyan, I did not mean to make a book of it.

Nay, I had undertook
To make another, which when almost done
Before I was aware I this begun.

For I was writing of the way to Heaven, and of the race of Christians who live nowadays, when I 'fell suddenly into an allegory'. Bunyan appears to have intended to make this allegory an episode in his treatise on the *Strait Gate*, but one thought kindled another, and the allegory grew so rapidly that he determined to keep it separate, lest it should quite swallow up and 'eat out' the serious treatise. The various classes of pretenders to religion enumerated at the end of the *Strait Gate* appear in the *Pilgrim's Progress* amongst the persons whom Christian meets upon the road. Those 'whose religion lieth only in their tongues' are represented by Mr. Talkative, the covetous professors who make a gain of religion by Mr. By-ends, and the wilfully ignorant by 'the very brisk lad' whose name was Ignorance. The legalist is heard of as Mr. Legality, and the formalist is one of the two men who 'come tumbling over the wall' because they think it too far round to go to the gate.

Bunyan was released from his imprisonment in 1676, and published *The Strait Gate* before the close of that year. The *Pilgrim's Progress* seems to have been unfinished when he left the gaol, and was completed outside its walls. Such at least is the inference which has been drawn from the curious break in the story which occurs on p. 153. After describing the parting of Christian and Hopeful with the shepherds on the Delectable Mountains, Bunyan concludes, 'So I awoke from my dream.' In the next paragraph he continues, 'And I slept and dreamed again, and saw the same two pilgrims going down the mountains along the highway towards the City.' Dr. Brown argues with great probability that this breaking of Bunyan's dream alludes to his release from the den in which he began his dream. When Bunyan had resumed and completed the first part of the *Pilgrim's*

Progress, he showed it to some of his friends and asked them whether he should print it or not. Some had scruples about the treatment of sacred things in a fictitious narrative, but finding them divided he determined to publish it, prefixing to it, however, a preface defending his use of similes and figures for the purpose of instruction. In December 1677 the book was in the hands of the printer, Nathaniel Ponder, and was entered by him at Stationers' Hall. It was licensed on February 18, 1678, and published forthwith in a little octavo volume of 232 pages at the price of eighteenpence. A second edition appeared within the year, a third in 1679, and by 1688 it had reached an eleventh edition. It was translated into Dutch in 1682, into French in 1685, and into Welsh in 1688. Additional proof of its popularity was given by unauthorized continuations, some of which were falsely attributed to Bunyan. The author of another which appeared in 1683, honestly styled Bunyan's volume 'a necessary and useful tract which hath deservedly obtained such an universal esteem and commendation', but complained that certain specified doctrines were inadequately treated in it, and that some passages occasioned 'lightness and laughter' in 'vain and frothy minds'.

The second part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* appeared in 1684. Bunyan's first intention had been to publish a companion to the *Pilgrim's Progress* rather than a continuation. 'As I was considering with myself,' he says, 'what I had written concerning the Progress of the Pilgrim from this world to glory; and how it has been acceptable to many in this nation: it came again into my mind to write, as then of him that was going to Heaven so now of the life and death of the ungodly and of their travel down from this world to Hell.' With this object he wrote the *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, which appeared in 1680. From this realistic picture of a vicious and swindling tradesman, which recalls both in subject and treatment some of Defoe's novels, Bunyan turned once more to allegory. *The Holy War*, which was published in 1682, is an attempt to treat in prose and for the people the problem which Milton had treated in verse. Its subject is the fall and redemption of mankind, the struggle between God and the devil from the soul of man, narrated under the similitude of the history of a besieged city. The town of Mansoul, as Mr. Froude has pointed out, represents sometimes the soul of a single man, sometimes the collective souls of the Christian world, and it is not always clear which the writer means. *The Holy War* is a much more elaborate allegory than the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and more completely symbolical in all its details, but its subject was less fitted for allegorical treatment. One seeks, like *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, to explain the ways of God to man, the other only to represent the way of man to heaven. One embodies the complete system of theology, the other rests not so much on Puritan doctrine as on the Puritan conception of human life. And because our little systems have their day and their place, while the religious instinct is something lasting and universal, the *Pilgrim's Progress* is read and *The Holy War* neglected. Add to this that the personages in the history of Mansoul are for the most part devoid of any human interest. The pilgrims have each their own individuality, while nothing but the label distinguishes Captain Credence from Captain Conviction. The trials of the Diabolonians after the conquest of Mansoul awake more interest than the siege, and the

condemned sinners have all the individuality which the saints lack. In *The Holy War* the spontaneity and freedom of the *Pilgrim's Progress* is absent. 'I did it mine own self to gratify,' says Bunyan of his first allegory. His second allegory was too obviously written to instruct others, and the genius of the story-teller is cramped by the theological framework of the story. Possibly Bunyan felt this himself. In the verses at the end of *The Holy War* his mind goes back to the earlier allegory; he turns suddenly to answer the critics who said the *Pilgrim's Progress* was not his own, and asserts his authorship of it in emphatic terms.

It came from mine own heart so to my head . . .
 Manner and matter too was all mine own,
 Nor was it unto any mortal known
 Till I had done it. Nor did any then
 By books, by wits, by tongues, or hand, or pen
 Add five words to it, or wrote half a line
 Thereof; the whole and every whit is mine.

This new allegory too, he continues, is also all my own; but his claim to have written the *Pilgrim's Progress* is evidently the more important in his eyes.

The best way to refute these critics, and to respond to the general desire which had led to the publication of unauthorized continuations, was to write a second part to the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The story 'of the setting out of Christian's wife and children, their dangerous journey, and their safe arrival at the desired country', was completed in 1684. Bunyan's warrant to Ponder, the printer, for its publication is dated January 1, 1684—that is 1685 in our modern reckoning—and the book was published between that date and March 25, when the year 1684 ended. It was nearly as popular as the first part, and reached its sixth edition in 1693.

Charles II died on February 6, 1685, just about the time when the second part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* appeared. The reaction against the Whigs and the accompanying persecution of the Nonconformists which had marked the last years of Charles II's reign continued during the first year of his successor's. In 1684 Bunyan published his *Seasonable Counsel, or Advice to Sufferers*, an exhortation to his persecuted brethren setting forth the duty of suffering cheerfully for the sake of their consciences, and the spiritual uses of adversity. His own freedom was once more in danger, and on December 23, 1685, he conveyed all his property to his wife, in order that his family might have some means of support if he should be again imprisoned. But though threatened and molested he escaped a third imprisonment, and James II's change of policy put an end to the danger.

Each change in the position of English Nonconformity is reflected in Bunyan's allegories. Persecution was at its hottest when he began to write, but even then the number of Nonconformists was increasing. Their sufferings gained them friends. 'The men being patient, and not rendering railing for railing, but contrarywise blessing, and giving good words for bad, some men in the Fair that were more observing and less prejudiced than the rest, began to check and blame the baser sort for their continual abuses done by them to the men.' A new candidate for martyrdom filled the place of each who suffered. When Christian left the town of Vanity, says Bunyan, 'I saw in my dream

that he went not forth alone, for there was one whose name was Hopeful (being made so by the beholding of Christian and Faithful in their words and behaviour in their sufferings at the Fair) who joined himself unto him, and entering into a brotherly covenant, told him that he would be his companion.' As soon as persecution relaxed the number of Nonconformists rapidly increased. In 1669 it was computed that there were some thirty in Bedford; in 1676, according to Archbishop Sheldon's religious census, their number was one hundred and twenty-one adults. With this increase came a new peril—the peril of false brethren who for the sake of gain made a profession of godliness. How much it occupied Bunyan's thoughts the character of By-ends shows, and above all the manner in which he retouched and further developed the figures of By-ends and his friends in the second and third edition of the first part of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The grave irony of Mr. Money-love's answer to the case of conscience propounded by his friends is worthy of Swift, and it was not unneeded. Bunyan himself felt no temptation to change a small living for a greater, though greater ones were offered him as his fame spread. 'He was not a man that preached by way of bargain for money,' wrote his first biographer, 'for he hath refused a more plentiful income to keep his station.'

The renewal of persecution which marked the end of Charles II's reign was preceded by an attack on the charters of the corporate towns. All over England Whigs and favourers of Nonconformists were put out of corporations, and Tories and persecutors put in. This process was just beginning when Bunyan wrote the *Holy War*, and it is anticipated in his account of the remodelling of the magistracy of Mansoul by Diabolus. When Mansoul was recaptured by the army of Emmanuel the process was reversed, a new charter given to the town, and godly magistrates appointed. In like fashion James II, when he adopted the policy embodied in the Declaration of Indulgence, remodelled the corporation of Bedford, and filled it with compliant tools of the court and with Nonconformists who were willing to support the king's scheme. Some of Bunyan's congregation were amongst the new councillors, and his influence was eagerly sought by the court candidate for the borough. But Bunyan himself seems to have distrusted the king's aims in granting liberty of conscience. He was glad to lay hold of this liberty as 'an acceptable thing in itself', but he would have nothing to do with the regulators employed to remodel the government of the municipalities. 'When a great man in those days, coming to Bedford upon some such errand, sent for him, as it is supposed to give him a place of public trust, he would by no means come at him, but sent his excuse.'

Dread of the progress of Catholicism explains Bunyan's reluctance, as it accounts for the lukewarmness of the Nonconformists in general towards the toleration policy of James II. When he wrote the first part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* he had hardly regarded Catholicism as a serious danger. Giant Pope was still alive, but grown so crazy and stiff in his joints that he could only sit at the mouth of his cave 'grinning at pilgrims, and biting his nails because he cannot come at them'. The fierce excitement of the Popish Plot produced a change of feeling in Bunyan's party and in Bunyan himself. In the second part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* the Roman Church appears in the shape of the

monster living in the woods near the town of Vanity, a monster that was 'very rampant', and 'made great havoc of children'. Like Mr. Great-heart and his 'valiant worthies', Bunyan was eager to check the monster's ravages. One of his last works was a posthumously published treatise against the Roman Church, called *Of Anti-christ and his ruine, and the Slaying of the Witnesses*. He did not live to see the fall of King James put an end to his fears, or the Revolution which guaranteed the freedom of conscience he desired. Bunyan died about ten weeks before William of Orange landed in England, on August 31, 1688, and was buried in the cemetery in Bunhill Fields.

To contemporaries outside his own sect the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress* was nothing but a dissenting preacher with some little reputation among Nonconformists, a preacher, as a news-letter which mentioned his death remarked, 'said to be gifted in that way, though once a cobbler.' The literary fame of the author was a thing of growth as slow as the popularity of his book had been immediate. Addison cited Bunyan as a proof that even despicable writers had their admirers, Young compared his prose to Durfey's poetry, and when Cowper praised him he apologized for his praises :

I name thee not, lest so despised a name
Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame.

Yet before the eighteenth century ended the dictators of taste had begun to praise the work of the unlettered preacher. Swift wrote that he had been more entertained and more confirmed by a few pages in the *Pilgrim's Progress* than by a long discussion upon the will and the intellect. Johnson compared passages in it to Spenser and Dante, and told Boswell it was one of the three books which readers wished longer. It had great merit, he declared, 'both for invention, imagination, and conduct of the story,' and when Bishop Percy's little girl confessed that she had not read it, he put her off his knee at once, and said he would not give a farthing for her. In 1830 the publication of Southey's edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, followed by Macaulay's essay, showed that the critics had at last accepted the verdict of the people on Bunyan's masterpiece, and in 1880, with the publication of Froude's life of the author, Bunyan was formally included in the roll of 'English men of letters'. It was not a dignity which he ever desired, and he would probably have classed most of his associates with Talkative the son of Saywell, who dwelt in Prating Row, and discoursed glibly of the history and mystery of things.

To explain the immediate popularity of the *Pilgrim's Progress* with Bunyan's contemporaries is more necessary than to trace the growth of his posthumous fame. A certain amount of success the very choice of his subject secured. Religious books were almost the only serious reading of the class for which Bunyan wrote. Any allegory which appealed to Puritans of the lower and middle classes, and represented in an imaginative form feelings they had experienced, struggles they had gone through, and ideals they cherished, was sure of a wide circle of readers. The inner meaning of Bunyan's narrative was plain enough, and a hundred pious commentators have pointed out the significance of every incident. But considered simply as a story, there was in what Bunyan terms 'the outside of my dream' much to explain its immediate popularity.

→ In the first place it was a great advantage that the idea on which Bunyan based his allegory was one with which people had long been familiar. Different commentators have pitched upon different books as containing the germ of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. A long list of such works is given in the preface to Mr. Offor's edition, and Guillaume de Guilleville's *Pilgrimage of the Soule*, of which Caxton printed a translation in 1483, has been gravely republished as Bunyan's original. If Bunyan took the hint from any book it was from the Bible.¹ But the truth is the idea that life was but a pilgrimage through this world to the next was common property. In the Middle Ages the sight of the crowds of men who with staff and scrip and pilgrim's weeds travelled to the shrines of the Holy Land, had suggested to contemplative minds the obvious parallel. As late as the middle of the sixteenth century English pilgrims flocked to visit the shrines of St. Thomas of Canterbury or our Lady of Walsingham. The Middle Ages bequeathed the idea to the Protestants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and long after pilgrimages had ceased, the pilgrim of tradition—

With his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon

was a figure familiar to the minds of the people. To give the traditional equipment of the pilgrim a spiritual significance also was easy and natural. Sir Walter Raleigh, for instance, does so in the poem called the 'Pilgrimage', which he wrote when he was condemned to death.

Give me my scallop shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon,
My scrip of joy—immortal diet,
My bottle of Salvation,
My gown of glory, hope's true gage,
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.

Emblem writers like Whitney and Quarles had popularized the same idea in their pictures, and George Herbert had embodied it in one of the poems in his *Temple*.

Thus the fundamental conception of the *Pilgrim's Progress* was one with which English readers were perfectly familiar, and when Bunyan made it the basis of an allegory, their minds were prepared to understand his hidden meaning.

Another cause of the book's success was its style. It addressed the unlettered Puritan in a speech which unlettered Puritans could understand. The people for whom Bunyan wrote were illiterate people like his pilgrims themselves. Christian 'was a scholar', and could read a notice board, but Hopeful could not even do that. But they knew their Bible well, and were never at a loss for a text. They could follow Bunyan in his highest flights, and in his most serious theological arguments, because he used the language of the Bible, and adopted its words, its phrases, and its imagery. 'Bunyan's English,' says Mr. J. R. Green, 'is the English of the Bible. In no book do we see more clearly the new imaginative force which had been given to the common life of Englishmen by their study of the Bible.'

This is true, but it is not the whole truth. In the narrative part of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and in much of the dialogue, Bunyan used

¹ Hebrews xi. 13.

the everyday language of the seventeenth-century workman or shop-keeper, which was a much more homely and less dignified dialect than the language of the Bible.

As Macaulay remarks, the 'vocabulary of the *Pilgrim's Progress* is the vocabulary of the common people', and with the limitation just pointed out the statement is correct. Hence come the colloquialisms, the obsolete words, and the homely expressions. For instance, when the pilgrims got to the top of the hill called Difficulty 'they were very willing to sit down, for they were all in a pelting heat'. When they reached their inn after a long day's walking, the host says to them, 'You have gone a good stitch, you may well be a-weary.' Their talk is full of proverbs and proverbial expressions. Christian says that the house of Talkative 'is as empty of religion as the white of an egg is of savour'. The common people that know Talkative say that he is 'a saint abroad and a devil at home'. When Hopeful says something Christian disapproves, Christian, in the words of the margin, 'snibbeth his fellow for unadvised speaking,' and tells him he talks like a newly-hatched chicken. 'Thou talkest like one upon whose head is the shell to this day.'

Sometimes Bunyan drops into the language of his unregenerate days. Old Mr. Honest is described by Great-heart as 'a cock of the right kind'—an obvious reminiscence of a profane sport, which Bunyan had doubtless taken part in in the old times. There was a bad relapse in his account of the escape of the prisoners from Doubting Castle. Even when Christian had discovered the key in his bosom, he found the iron gate difficult to unlock, for 'that lock went damnable hard'. Scrupulous modern editors have often altered the adjective.

The colloquial language of the *Pilgrim's Progress* was not an accident. Bunyan purposely chose the style most likely to appeal to the readers he wished to reach. The fowler, he remarks, sometimes finds his gun and his net insufficient, and must pipe and whistle to catch his birds. The fisherman when hook and line fail him is driven to tickling for trout. In the same way the fisher of men must attract in order to capture.

A similar reason explains the introduction of the symbolical sights and pictures which the pilgrims see in the House Beautiful and elsewhere. The man with the muck rake, the parlour full of dust, the two little children in their little chairs, the robin with the great spider in its mouth, and the rest—these transparent parables were introduced by Bunyan because he was writing for the young and the unlearned. 'I make bold to talk thus metaphorically,' explains Mr. Great-heart, 'for the ripening of the wits of young readers.' So when Mr. Interpreter led Mercy and Christiana into his 'Significant Rooms' to see the hen and chickens and other moral spectacles, he condescendingly told them, 'I chose, my darlings, to lead you into the room where such things are, because you are women, and they are easy for you.'

These symbolical pictures also illustrate the way in which Bunyan made use of the popular literature of his time. For a century before his day emblem-books had enjoyed a wide popularity both in England and in Europe. The little pictures symbolically setting forth moral and religious truths, and accompanied by prose and verse explanations,

were familiar to everybody. Hundreds of such works had been published both at home and abroad, both by Catholics and Protestants. The most popular of English emblem-writers, especially with the Puritans, was Francis Quarles, whose *Emblems, Divine and Moral* appeared in 1635. No book was commoner in Puritan households, and it cannot be doubted that Bunyan knew a work so easy to meet with, and so valued by his party. He even tried his hand at composing emblems himself, and published in 1686 what he called *A Book for Boys and Girls, or Country Rhymes for Children*. It was republished in the next century under the title of *Divine Emblems*, and equipped with curious cuts. The sights which Mr. Interpreter shows the pilgrims are attempts to express in plain prose what Bunyan himself afterwards tried to express in rough verses, and what the emblem-writers had expressed in wood cuts or copper plates. Having taken a popular idea and made it the basis of his allegory, Bunyan now took a hint from popular literature, using it to embellish his story, and to make his moral purpose clearer.

But whatever suggestions Bunyan derived from literature, he drew more from the world around him than from books. One of the most remarkable qualities of his story is the faithfulness with which it pictures the life of the times. The road on which the pilgrims travel is as realistically described as the pilgrims themselves. It is like an old Roman road in some respects, for it goes up the hill called Difficulty, and across 'the delicate plain called Ease as straight as a rule can make it'. Sometimes there is a high wall by the side of it, and fruit-trees hang their branches over the wall to tempt the children. Dogs bark at the travellers as they pass by, and frighten the women 'with the great voice of their roaring'. Other travellers overtake them or meet them on the road; they see men lying asleep by the roadside; they see criminals hanging in irons a little way from it. Sometimes 'a fine pleasant green lane' comes down into the road; on one side of it there is 'a meadow and a stile to go over into it', or a by-path such as that which leads Christian and Hopeful into the grounds of Giant Despair. It may be called the road to the Celestial City, but it is very like a common English seventeenth-century high-road. The dangers which beset the wayfarers are (in most cases) dangers which every seventeenth-century traveller had to face. Compare for instance Macaulay's description of an English road in the time of Charles II. 'It was only in fine weather that the whole breadth of the road was available for wheeled vehicles. Often the mud lay deep on the right and left, and only a narrow track of firm ground rose above the quagmire. It happened almost every day that coaches stuck fast until a team of cattle could be procured from some neighbouring farm to drag them out of the slough.' Does not this description at once recall that 'very miry slough' named Despond, where Christian and Pliable 'wallowed for a time, being grievously bedaubed with the dirt', just because they missed 'the good and substantial stepping-stones in the middle'? A more serious danger than the mud was the frequent floods. Macaulay illustrates this from Ralph Thoresby's account of his journeys from Leeds to London. 'On one occasion he learned that the floods were out between Ware and London, that passengers had to swim for their lives, and that a higgler had perished in the waters. In consequence of these tidings he turned out of the high-

road, and was conducted across some meadows where it was necessary for him to ride to the saddle skirts in water. In the course of another journey he narrowly escaped being swept away by an inundation of the Trent.' In like manner Christian and Hopeful were surprised in By-path Meadow by the sudden rising of the river. 'By this time the waters were greatly risen, by reason of which the way of going back was very dangerous. It was so dark, and the flood was so high, that in going back they had like to have been drowned nine or ten times.'

If the traveller escaped the mud and the waters, there was a third danger equally common and more terrible. The latter part of the seventeenth century was the golden age of the British highwayman. Then flourished Claude Duval, John Nevison, the Golden Farmer, Muldsack, and many others whose fame lives in the pages of Johnson's *Lives of Highwaymen and Pirates*. The open heaths and moors round London were their favourite hunting-grounds, or they lay in wait in the woods that bordered the great roads. Cambridge scholars on their way to London, says Macaulay, trembled as they approached Epping Forest. Oxford scholars for equally good reasons thanked God when they had passed Maidenhead Thicket. The mounted highwaymen attacked horsemen and coaches, the poor pedestrian was preyed upon by the footpads—gangs of sturdy rogues armed with cudgels, who assaulted and robbed the foot-traveller as he tramped on his weary way, and it was much if they spared his life. Such were the villains who attacked Valiant-for-truth, and plundered Little-Faith. Alter the names, and the robbery of Little-Faith reads like a page from the *Police News* of the period. 'The thing was this:—

'At the entering in at this passage, there comes down from Broadway Gate, a Lane called Dead Man's Lane; so called because of the murders that are commonly done there; and this Little-Faith going on pilgrimage as we do now, chanced to sit down there, and slept. Now there happened at that time, to come down the lane from Broadway Gate, three sturdy rogues, and their names were Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt (three brothers), and they espying Little-Faith, where he was, came galloping up with speed. Now the good man was just awake from his sleep, and was getting up to go on his journey. So they came up all to him, and with threatening language bid him stand.

'At this Little-Faith looked as white as a clout, and had neither power to fight nor fly. Then said Faint-heart, Deliver thy purse. But he making no haste to do it (for he was loathe to lose his money), Mistrust ran up to him, and thrusting his hand in his pocket, pulled out thence a bag of silver. Then he cried out, Thieves! Thieves! With that, Guilt with a great club that was in his hand, struck Little-Faith on the head, and with that blow felled him flat to the ground: where he lay bleeding as one that would bleed to death. All this while the thieves stood by. But, at last, they hearing that some were upon the road, and fearing lest it should be one Great-grace, that dwells in the city of Good-confidence, they betook themselves to their heels, and left this good man to shift for himself. Now, after a while, Little-Faith came to himself, and getting up, made shift to scramble on his way. This was the story.'

On the other hand, some of the perils the pilgrims meet with are

not perils to which seventeenth-century travellers were usually exposed. They did not generally meet a dragon 'straddling quite over the whole breadth of the way', or a giant preparing to pick a passenger's bones, or seven devils carrying a man down a very dark lane. There is a romantic as well as a realistic element in the story, and for this romantic element Bunyan was indebted to the popular literature of the time. Dr. Johnson, discussing the *Pilgrim's Progress* with Boswell, observes, in his confident way, that there is reason to think that Bunyan had read Spenser. A recent editor, Mr. Venables, takes this hint, and works it out, trying to show from certain resemblances between the *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Faery Queen*, that Bunyan was familiar with Spenser's epic. He compares the House Beautiful to Spenser's House of Holiness, Apollyon to the Dragon vanquished by the Red Cross Knight, and the cave of giants Pope and Pagan with the cave of Despair. Other parallels might be pointed out, but nevertheless it is very unlikely that Bunyan ever read a line of Spenser. The sources of Bunyan's literary inspiration are to be found, not in the books which were read by scholars and gentlemen, but in the literature of the people. Both Bunyan and Spenser were indebted to the romances of chivalry for their romantic machinery, their giants and dragons and enchanters. Spenser knew the romances in their literary form, and in the epics of Ariosto and other Italian poets. Bunyan knew them in their popular form, in the abridgements, the compilations, and the imitations which ballads and chap-books had made familiar to Englishmen of the uneducated classes. They had been his favourite reading when he was unconverted. 'I remember,' he says, speaking of a preacher, 'he alleged many a scripture, but those I valued not. The Scriptures, thought I, what are they? A dead letter, a little ink and paper, of three or four shillings worth. Give me a ballad, a news-book, George on horseback, or Bevis of Southampton; give me some book that teaches curious arts, that tells of old fables; but for the holy Scriptures I cared not.'

One of the best examples of these story books is Richard Johnson's *Seven Champions of Christendom*, originally published in 1607, which went through innumerable editions. It begins with the life of St. George, and is doubtless what Bunyan refers to as 'George'. This book or some other of the same kind suggested many of the incidents which happen to Bunyan's pilgrims. The monsters in the *Pilgrim's Progress* are of two kinds. Apollyon was a fiend somewhat of the nature of a dragon. He had 'scales like a fish, wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was like the mouth of a lion'. He made a 'yelling and a hideous roaring' all the time of the fight, and when he spake he 'spake like a dragon'. Christian was healed of the wounds he received by applying to them some of the leaves of the tree of life. In the same way St. George in the *Seven Champions* was healed of the wounds he got from the Egyptian dragon, by the virtues of the fruit of a miraculous tree that grew near the site of the battle.

In the encounters of the pilgrims with the giants the influence of the romances is more plainly perceptible. The giants are of a less complex nature than the monsters. Despair is only an immense man. 'He had a cap of steel upon his head, a breastplate of fire girded to him, and he came out in iron shoes with a great club in his hand.' Slaygood

is not only a giant, but a cannibal. 'He was of the nature of the flesh eaters,' and is found stripping Feeble-mind 'with a purpose after that to pick his bones'. He resembles the giant thirty feet high 'who never eats any meat but the raw flesh of mankind', whom St. George vanquishes.

✓ Giant Maul is perhaps the most typical of Bunyan's giants, and his fight with Great-heart is the most minutely described. It begins, as these fights generally begin in the romances, by a defiance and an exchange of taunts between the two champions.

'Then the giant came up, and Mr. Great-heart went to meet him, and as he went he drew his sword, but the giant had a club. So without more ado they fell to it, and at the first blow the giant struck Mr. Great-heart down upon one of his knees; with that the women and children cried out. So Mr. Great-heart recovering himself, laid about him in full lusty manner, and gave the giant a wound in his arm; thus he fought for the space of an hour, to that height of heat that the breath came out of the giant's nostrils as the heat doth out of a boiling caldron.

'Then they sat down to rest them, but Mr. Great-heart betook him to prayer; also the women and children did nothing but sigh and cry all the time that the battle did last.

'When they had rested them and taken breath they both fell to it again, and Mr. Great-heart with a full blow fetched the giant down to the ground. "Nay, hold," quoth he, "and let me recover." So Mr. Great-heart fairly let him get up; so to it they went again; and the giant missed but a little of narrowly breaking Mr. Great-heart's skull with his club.

'Mr. Great-heart seeing that runs to him in the full heat of his spirit, and pierceth him under the fifth rib: with that the giant began to faint, and could hold up his club no longer. Then Mr. Great-heart seconded his blow, and smit the head of the giant from his shoulders.'

The incidents of this fight have a general resemblance to the incidents of the battles recorded in the popular romances. Giants in these stories habitually fight with clubs, or even with whole trees. The giant Blanderon in his fight with St. Anthony employed an oak tree, and with his great oak he so nimbly bestirred him with such vehement blows that they seemed to shake the earth. And had not the politic knight continually skipped from the fury of his blow, he had been bruised as small as flesh unto the pot, for every stroke that the giant gave the root of his oak entered at least three inches into the ground.'

Another family characteristic of these giants is that, like Giant Maul, they get extremely hot, while the knight, who is always in good condition, keeps cool. Blanderon, for instance, grows so breathless that he is finally unable to lift his club above his head: 'The sweat of the giant's brows ran into his eyes, and by reason he was so extreme fat he grew so blind that he could not see to endure combat any longer.'

Great-heart is a most chivalrous fighter, and when the giant is knocked down allows him to get up again. St. Anthony is less generous to Blanderon, and refuses him the breathing time for which he petitions, but Guy of Warwick is as obliging as Great-

heart. Colebrand, the giant whom Guy is fighting, becomes very thirsty, and says :

Good Sir, an it be thy will
Give me leave to drink my fill,
For sweet St. Charity,
And I will do thee the same deed
Another time if thou have need,
I tell thee certainly.

On which Guy agrees to wait till he has refreshed himself.

One must not exaggerate these resemblances between Bunyan's story and the stories in which he had once delighted, but it is plain that he was not uninfluenced by them. They suggested the adventures to which he gave an allegorical meaning, and his recollections of them sometimes supplied him with appropriate details.

There is the same mixture of realism and romance in Bunyan's description of the countries through which the pilgrims travel, and of the scenery through which the road passes. Here and there reminiscences of popular literature colour his pictures, or even suggest his scenes, but for the most part he draws what he had seen with his own eyes. Bunyan's feeling for natural beauty is very keen, but it is the landscape of his native Midlands which pleased him most. From the roof of the House Beautiful Christian sees afar off 'a most pleasant mountainous country, beautified with woods and vineyards and fruits of all sorts; flowers also with springs and fountains very beautiful to behold'. But when he gets amongst rocks he is rather afraid of them. In the story they threaten to topple down on the traveller's head, or to give way under his feet. Woods and green fields, rich meadows and softly-sliding waters attract Bunyan's imagination most. In his ideal country, the land of Beulah, the air is 'sweet and pleasant', 'the sun shineth night and day.' 'They heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth.' More mundane, because further from the celestial city, is the beauty of the Valley of Humiliation. It is empty and solitary; 'I love to be in such places where there is no rattling with coaches nor rumbling with wheels,' exclaims Mercy. 'It consisteth much in meadows,' says Mr. Great-heart, 'and if a man were to come here in summer time as we do now, if he knew not anything before thereof, and if he also delighted himself in the sight of his eyes, he might see all that would be delightful to him. Behold how green this valley is, also how beautified with lilies.'

The shepherd boy feeding his father's sheep supplies the one touch necessary to complete the picture. 'The boy was in very mean clothes but of a very fresh and well-favoured countenance, and as he sate by himself he sung. . . . Then said their guide, Do you hear him? I will dare to say that this boy lives a merrier life, and wears more of that herb called Heartsease in his bosom, than he that is clad in silk and velvet.'

The song the shepherd sings is a song of content—a Puritan echo of a hundred similar songs of the Elizabethan poets—like in temper, if simpler in expression, to 'Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers', or, 'My mind to me a kingdom is,' or, 'How happy is he born and taught.' We are back in Arcadia, with Sidney's shepherds piping as if they would never grow old, or with the happy melodist

of Keats 'forever piping songs forever new'. These fair lands of Bunyan's fancy are a kind of homely Arcadia—like the Arcadia of earlier poets, and yet different, a Puritan instead of a pagan Arcadia. Marlowe's passionate shepherd promises his shepherdess 'a thousand fragrant posies'. 'In the land of Beulah the children of the town would go into the king's gardens to gather nosegays for the pilgrims, and bring them to them with much affection.' In Marlowe's Arcadia there are 'shallow rivers to whose falls melodious birds sing madrigals'. In the grove outside the House Beautiful the birds sing with a 'most curious melodious note', but they sing the psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins.

Amidst these landscapes from Bedfordshire and the echoes of Arcadia appear once more the reminiscences of popular romance. One of the chief characteristics of romances is what Milton terms

Forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.

Of this nature is Bunyan's Enchanted Land. 'By this time,' he says, 'they were got to the enchanted ground, where the air naturally tended to make one drowsy. And that place was all grown over with briars and thorns; excepting here and there, where was an enchanted arbour, upon which if a man sits, or in which if a man sleep, 'tis a question, say some, whether ever they shall rise or wake again in this world. Over this forest therefore they went.' In one of these arbours Great-heart and his band find Heedless and Too-bold in their unwaking slumbers.

Just so in the *Seven Champions*, when St. David ventured into the Enchanted Garden of the Magician Ormandine, 'all his senses were overtaken with a sudden and heavy sleep.' He fell flat on the ground, 'where his eyes were so fast locked up by magic art, and his waking senses drowned in such a dead slumber, that it was as impossible to recover himself from sleep as to pull the sun out of the firmament.' So he lay asleep for seven years. Further on in the same romance occurs an enchanted bed, which is not unlike one of Bunyan's arbours. 'Whoever but sat upon the sides, or touched the furniture of the bed, were presently cast in as deep a sleep as if they had drunk the juice of Dwaile or the seed of poppy.'

Even the conception of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, which Bunyan invests with so much spiritual significance, finds its parallels in these romances. St. George has to journey through an Enchanted Vale, when he hears 'dismal croaking of night ravens, hissing of serpents, bellowing of bulls, and roaring of monsters'. St. Andrew traverses in a land of continual darkness the Vale of Walking Spirits amid like sounds of terror. To say that here and elsewhere Bunyan's incidents were suggested by his recollections of popular romance, does not diminish the originality of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, but helps to explain its popularity. The man who, like Bunyan himself, turned from reading romances to thinking about his soul and its salvation, found in Bunyan's pages something of the charm he had found in the old fables of adventure.

When the pilgrims reach Vanity Fair we are once more amid scenes drawn from the life of the times. 'The Fair,' Bunyan tells us, 'was an ancient thing of long standing, and a very great fair.' He describes

with the most vivid realism the rows of booths where all kinds of merchandise were sold, the shows where jugglings and plays and games of every kind were to be seen, and the noise of buyers and sellers in its streets. It is possible, as commentators suggest, that he had in his mind the actual fair which had been annually held at Elstow ever since Henry II had granted a charter for it to the nuns of Elstow Abbey. Or he may have recalled the greater fair held at Stourbridge, near Cambridge, which he must have seen in his travels, or perhaps the Bartholomew Fair held at Smithfield in London. In Ben Jonson's play on Bartholomew Fair he depicts the adventures of two Puritans who strayed into that scene. All the sights and sounds of the fair shock them. 'Walk on in the middle way,' cries the leader to his companion, 'turn neither to the right nor to the left; let not your eyes be drawn aside with vanity, nor your ears with noises. The wares are the wares of devils, and the whole Fair is the shop of Satan.' Zeal of the land Busy—as Jonson's Puritan is named—becomes as uncontrollable as Mr. Fearing when his blood was up. He is moved in the spirit to protest against the abuses of the fair by throwing over a basket of gingerbread, and is put in the stocks for it.

Gifford, in his edition of Jonson, conjectured that Bunyan in the days of his youth read Jonson's play, and asserted that Jonson's drama was the groundwork of *Vanity Fair*. But nothing is less likely than that Bunyan had read Jonson's satire against the Puritans; similar incidents must have come to his knowledge, for they were not uncommon. The Quakers in the days of the Commonwealth habitually preached in fairs and markets, and suffered accordingly. 'On the market day,' writes George Fox in his journal, 'I went to Lancaster, and spake through the market in the dreadful power of God, declaring the day of the Lord to the people, and crying out against all their deceitful merchandise.' In *Vanity Fair* and in the incidents which followed the arrival of Christian and Faithful, Bunyan is once more copying life, and not borrowing from literature.

Equally realistic is the trial of Christian and Faithful. It resembles, as Macaulay does not fail to point out, the parody of justice which was administered by hostile judges to accused Nonconformists. When Baxter was tried in 1685 for complaining in print of the persecutions of his brethren, Lord Jefferies behaved very like Lord Hategood. 'This is an old rogue,' said Jefferies, 'a schismatical knave, a hypocritical villain. He deserves to be whipped at the cart's tail.' When Baxter strove to argue in his defence, Jefferies rudely stopped him. 'Richard, Richard, dost thou think we will let thee poison the Court?'

'Richard, thou art an old knave. Thou hast written books enough to fill a cart, and every book as full of sedition as an egg is of meat. By the grace of God I'll look after thee.'

In the same manner Hategood addressed Faithful, saying, 'Thou Runagate, Heretick, and Traitor, hast thou heard what these honest gentlemen have witnessed against thee?'

'May I speak a few words in my own defence?'

'Sirrah, Sirrah, thou deservest to live no longer, but to be slain immediately upon the place; yet that all men may see our gentleness towards thee, let us see what thou hast to say.'

The trial at the town of *Vanity* should be compared with the trials

which took place at the town of Mansoul as related in the *Holy War*. There is a singular resemblance in the deliberations of the two juries, and when the good men have the upper hand they give the bad men just as short a shrift as Faithful received.

A comparison of the trials in these two books also brings out more clearly the influence which another species of popular literature had exercised upon Bunyan. Allegorical trials played a great part in English and foreign polemical literature. There are several anti-Catholic pamphlets of the time of the English Reformation in which the form of a trial is adopted. Such for instance is the *Examination of the Mass* published in 1547. In the seventeenth century the same device was often employed by controversialists on both sides. When the Presbyterians got the upper hand, and endeavoured to suppress the worship of the Independents, a bold Independent printed *The Trial of Mr. Persecution*. Under the Protectorate, when the Government was engaged in suppressing the old festivals of the Church, there came to its assistance a *Trial of Father Christmas* for corrupting the world by riotous living.

A Puritan divine, Richard Bernard, of Batcombe, employed this device of a trial for much the same purpose as Bunyan used it, that is for moral rather than for controversial purposes. Bernard's book, which was published in 1627, went through nine editions by 1634, and was very popular with Puritans of the class to which Bunyan belonged. The title of the book is *The Isle of Man, or the Legal Proceedings in Manshire against Sin. Wherein, by way of a continued allegory, the chief malefactors disturbing both Church and Commonwealth are detected and attacked, with their arraignment and judicial trial according to the laws of England*.

Manshire is the name of the county in which the trials take place. The assizes are being held at the county town which is called Soul. 'That worthy judge Conscience' presides, and before him the criminals appear one after another. The names of these offenders are Old Man, who represents what in theological language is called 'the old Adam', his wife, Mistress Heart, his servant, Wilful Will, Covetousness, and others. A few extracts from the trial of Old Man will supply a specimen of Bernard's method of handling his allegory. The indictment is set forth in the usual legal form.

'Old Man, thou art indicted here by the name of Old Man of the town of Eve's temptation, in the county of Adam's consent, that upon the day of Man's fall in Paradise when he was driven out, thou didst corrupt the whole nature of man.'

David and St. Paul bear witness against the Criminal, who argues in his own defence much as the Pelagians do vainly talk. He is condemned to death and prays for mercy. 'Good my Lord, I beseech you be good unto me, and cast not away so poor an old man, good my Lord, for I am at this day 5564 years old.'

But his plea for mercy and his request to be allowed benefit of clergy are all in vain. He is sentenced to be hung, or rather, as the judge says, 'to be cut off with all his works.'

Bernard's handling of his allegory is awkward and cumbrous; he can neither tell a story, nor draw a character, and he has very little humour, though he apologizes for showing too much. But there are nevertheless certain resemblances between the *Isle of Man* and the

Holy War which seem to show that Bunyan had read the work of the earlier allegorist. The town of Soul in the county of Manshire naturally suggests Bunyan's town of Mansoul. Bernard's Wilful Will is the prototype of Bunyan's Lord Will be Will. There are touches in the trials described by Bernard which remind the reader of incidents in those related by Bunyan. Lord Covetousness in Bunyan's book changes his name to Prudent-thrifty, and in the same way Bernard's Covetousness finds a flaw in his indictment, pleading that his real name is Thrift. And Judge Conscience addresses Covetousness much in the manner that Judge Hategood addresses Faithful.

'Sirrah, Sirrah, thou that hast so impudently denied thy name here before the face of thy country; it being so clearly proved against thee every way, what canst thou allege for thyself that now the sentence of death should not be pronounced against thee?'

All I wish to show is that in introducing these trials in his two allegories Bunyan was adopting a literary device with which English readers were already familiar, and one which was specially popular with the readers for whom he wrote. In his hands the old idea received a new life, and the tedious abstractions of the allegorical courts became living persons. It is in this power of giving life to his characters that the supreme excellence of Bunyan as an allegorist lies. Whatever adventures his pilgrims pass through they are always flesh and blood Englishmen of the seventeenth century, speaking and acting as English Puritans of their class would have acted under the conditions which Bunyan's imagination created. The serious discourse with which Christian and Faithful while away their march is as true to life as the road or the fair through which they pass. Ellwood the Quaker tells us in his autobiography how he and his friend Ovy set forth to learn from Isaac Pennington the true principles of Quakerism.

'We met at Stokenchurch,' he says, 'with our staves in our hands like a couple of pilgrims, intending to walk on foot; and having taken some refreshment and rest at Wycombe, went on cheerfully in the afternoon, entertaining each other with grave and religious discourses, which made the walk the easier.'¹

It has often been said that the pilgrims in Bunyan's story are as individual as Chaucer's pilgrims. Coleridge goes so far as to complain that the allegory is so strongly individualized that it ceases to be allegory, the characters become real persons with nicknames. Bunyan's characters themselves seem to feel that they are not abstractions, but men. Mr. By-ends protests when he is addressed by his name, 'That is not my name, but indeed it is a nickname given me by some that cannot abide me.' Another character modestly explains that his name is too good for him.

"Your name is old Honesty, is it not," asks Great-heart, . . . So the old man blushed and said, "Not Honesty in the abstract, but Honest is my name, and I wish that my nature shall agree to what I am called."

Bunyan conceives his characters so clearly that he gives them not merely the utterances, but the features and the gestures appropriate to their parts. Mr. Honest recognizes Mr. Feeble-mind by his likeness to Mr. Fearing. 'He was mine uncle,' answers Fearing, 'he and I have been much of a temper; he was a little shorter than I, but

¹ Ed. Morley, p. 113.

yet we were much of a complexion.' At which old Honest observes with awkward candour, 'I am apt to believe you were related to one another: for you have his whitely look, a cast like his with your eye, and your speech is much alike.' Old Honest indeed is a keen observer of the little tricks of manner and bearing in which character reveals itself. 'Madam Bubble,' he reflectively remarks to Mr. Stand-fast when he hears her name mentioned, 'Madam Bubble, is she not a tall comely dame, something of a swarthy complexion?' 'Right, you hit it,' says Stand-fast, 'she is just such a one.'

'Doth she not speak very smoothly, and give you a smile at the end of the sentence?'

'You fall right upon it again, these are her very actions.'

'Doth she not wear a great purse at her side, and is not her hand often in it fingering her money as if that was her heart's delight?'

'Tis just so—Had she stood by all this while, you could not more amply have set her forth before me.'

It is curious that Bunyan's power of individualizing his personages seems for a moment to leave him when he gives them proper names. Christiana and Mercy are clearly drawn, but Matthew, Joseph, Samuel, and James are little better than lay-figures. Beyond the fact that one was fond of his catechism and another too fond of green plums, there is little to distinguish them. And this is stranger because in the second part—inferior as it is on the whole to the first part—Bunyan handles his allegorical characters with more freedom and ease than in the first. The most vivid and impressive figure in it is Great-heart, the servant of Mr. Interpreter. He is a combination of two persons mentioned in the first part—of Mr. Great-grace, who is 'excellent good at his weapons' and bears in his face the scars of former battles, and of the nameless 'man of a very stout countenance' who fights his way through the armed men into the palace, 'cutting and hacking most fiercely.' But Great-heart is not merely the strong man armed; he beguiles the journey of the pilgrims he protects by the charms of his conversation. He begins, it is true, by a lengthy discourse on justification by faith, but he soon becomes humanized, and tells humorous stories of the pilgrims he has known, such as Mr. Fearing, 'the most troublesome pilgrim that ever I met with in all my days.'

To the children he is always kind and affable. He takes the little boy by the hand up the Hill Difficulty, and cheers the others on, 'Come, my pretty boys; how do you like going on a pilgrimage?'

He jokes with them because they run and get behind him when they meet the lions.

But when there is more real danger—when they go through the valley—he is first behind and then in front, saying to them: 'Be of good cheer—we shall be out by and by,' or 'Let them that are most afraid keep close to me'.

A very pleasing and natural touch is his delight in pilgrims of his own temper. When they meet old Honest asleep he at first takes them for thieves.

'What would, or could you a done, to a helped yourself, if indeed we had been of that company,' asks Great-heart.

'Done,' answers Honest, 'why I would a fought as long as breath had been in me.'

'Well said, Father Honest, well said,' quoth the guide, 'for by this I know thou art a cock of the right kind.'

So, too, when they meet the man with his sword drawn and his face all bloody from a three hours' fight with three thieves, all the old soldierly instincts break out in Great-heart at his story. 'Then said Great-heart to Mr. Valiant-for-truth, "Thou hast worthily behaved thyself; let me see thy sword."' So he showed it him.

'When he had taken it in his hand and looked thereon a while, he said, "Ha, it is a right Jerusalem Blade."

'Mr. Great-heart was delighted in him, for he loved one greatly that he found to be a man of his hands.'

So vivid is the portrait, so characteristic the touches, that one thinks Bunyan must have had in his mind's eye when he drew it some real soldier, someone whom he had served under at Newport, or some scarred veteran of Naseby and Worcester, who had come back to live in Bedford and turned his sword into a reaping hook.

In the second part of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was published in 1684, six years after the first part, Bunyan handles his allegorical characters with more freedom. Sometimes he seems to forget the allegory for a moment, and to let the sense of humour, or the story-telling instinct, run away with him. Look, for instance, at two episodes in the second part.

Matthew's illness after his over-indulgence in plums is a little crudely described, but it is humorous as well as realistic. 'Pray Sir,' says the afflicted mother to the 'antient and well-approved physician', 'try the utmost of your skill with him, whatever it costs;' to which he replies with professional dignity, 'Nay, I hope I shall be reasonable.'

Matthew's reluctance to take his physic, and his mother's moving entreaties to him, are copied from the life. 'With that she touched one of the pills with the end of her tongue. "Oh, Matthew," said she, "this potion is sweeter than honey."' As to the pills themselves, 'he was to take them three at a time fasting, in half a quarter of a pint of the tears of repentance.'

In the end after the cure is wrought the antient physician praises his pills. 'It is a universal pill, it is good against all the diseases that pilgrims are incident to.' 'Pray Sir,' replies the provident parent, 'make me up twelve boxes of them;' and he does.

All this is, of course, allegorical, but the reader forgets all about its spiritual significance, and takes no notice of the texts in the margin. He may be edified by it in the end, but for the moment he is simply 'merry and jocund', as the pilgrims are when they dance in the road.

A page or two earlier comes the episode of Mercy's love affair. At the House Beautiful Mercy 'had a visitor that pretended some goodwill unto her. His name was Mr. Brisk, a man of some breeding, and that pretended to religion; but a man that stuck very close to the world. So he came once or twice or more to Mercy, and offered love unto her. Now Mercy was of a fair countenance, and therefore the more alluring.

'Her mind also was, to be always busying of herself in doing; for when she had nothing to do for herself she would be making of hose and garments for others, and would bestow them upon them that had need. And Mr. Brisk, not knowing where or how she disposed of what she made, seemed to be greatly taken, for he found her never idle.

"I will warrant her a good housewife," quoth he to himself. Mercy then revealed the business to the maidens that were of the house, and enquired of them concerning him, for they did know him better than she. So they told her, that he was a very busy young man, and one that pretended to religion; but was, as they feared, a stranger to the power of that which was good.

"Nay, then," said Mercy, "I will look no more on him; for I purpose never to have a clog to my soul."

Prudence then replied that there needed no great matter of discouragement to be given to him, her continuing so as she had begun to do for the poor would quickly cool his courage. So the next time he comes, he finds her at her old work a-making of things for the poor. Then said he, "What! always at it?" "Yes," said she, "either for myself or for others." "And what can thou earn a day?" quoth he. "I do these things," said she, "that I may be rich in good works, laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that I may lay hold on eternal life." "Why, prithee, what dost thou do with them?" said he. "Clothe the naked," said she. With that his countenance fell. So he forebore to come at her again; and when he was asked the reason why, he said, "Mercy was a pretty lass, but troubled with ill-conditions."

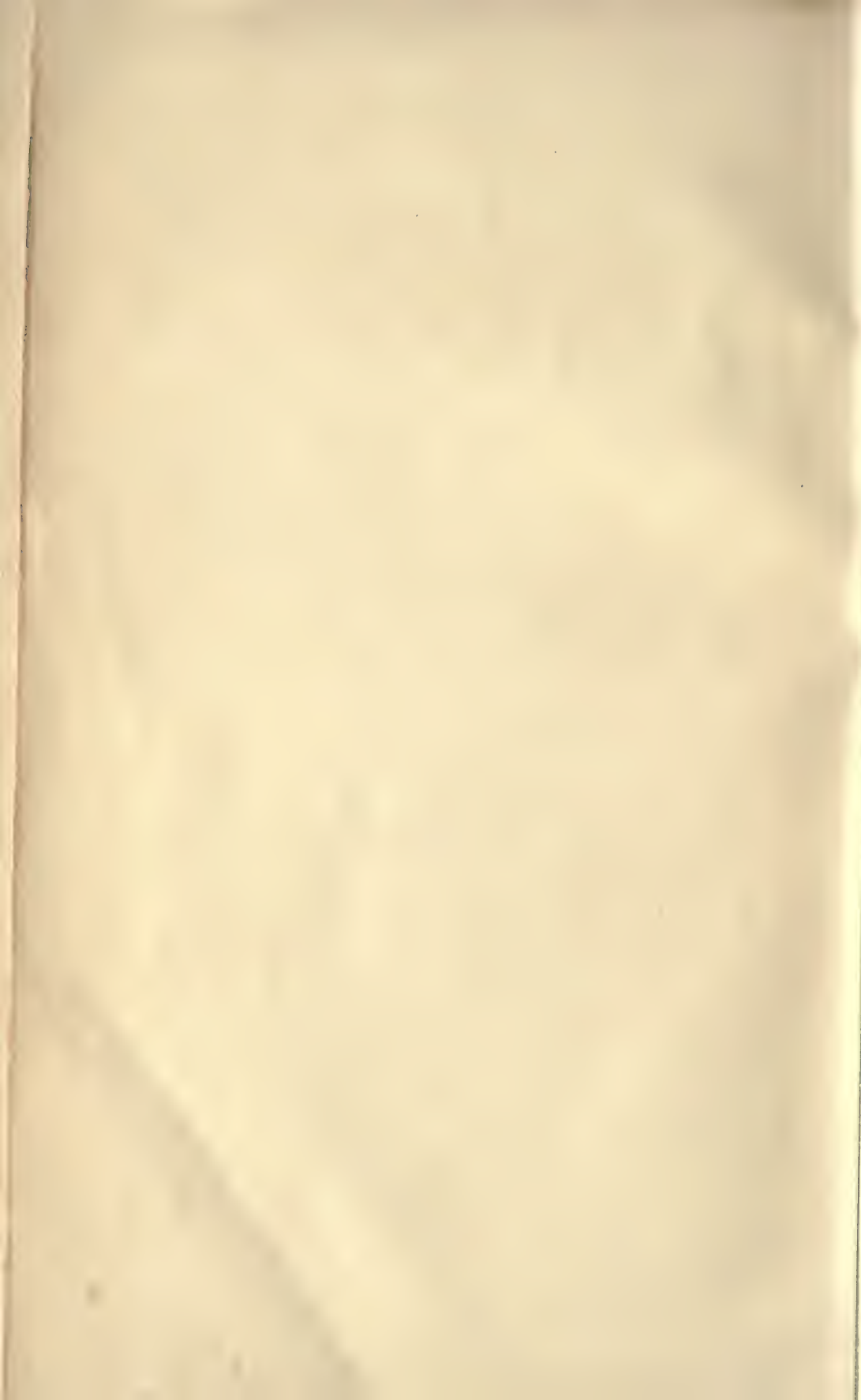
Mercy's comment puts the finishing touch to the whole picture. 'Mercy and Mr. Brisk,' observes Prudence, 'are of characters so different, that I believe they will never come together.' Then says Mercy, with an air of modest pride, and doubtless with her usual blush, 'I might a had husbands afore now, tho' I spake not of it to any; but they were such as did not like my conditions, though never did any of them find fault with my person.'

Here the allegory disappears altogether. We have simply an incident in the life of a fair Puritan described with absolute fidelity to nature; the actors are ordinary men and women of the time, and the fact that their names have a moral significance makes no difference to the story. We are passing, in fact, from allegory to the novel with an improving tendency. Bunyan is here the forerunner of Hannah More and a whole generation of novelists who sought to combine realistic fiction and moral teaching, while Mr. Brisk is the not very remote ancestor of Coelebs in search of a wife. In the days when the English novel did not exist, an allegory which was so like a story of everyday life had a charm which it is not easy for us to appreciate now. Bunyan was not merely the first of English allegorists; he is one of the founders of the English novel and the forerunner of Defoe.

It is time to sum up this analysis of the causes of the popularity of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan took a familiar idea as the basis of his story, and told it in a language that was simple or elevated just as the subject required. He put the essence of his own life into the story; put into it reproductions of the life he saw round him, and recollections of the books he had read; made his actors real men and women, and made his narrative by turns satirical and enthusiastic, humorous and pathetic, realistic and romantic. It was no wonder that 'the outside of his dream' attracted his readers, but what united and harmonized all these different elements was the inner spirit of his dream. That which gives the book a lasting power is the ideal of

life which underlies it all—of life as the Puritan conceived it then and conceives it still. The *Pilgrim's Progress* is the prose epic of English Puritanism ; it contains much that is only temporary and local in its application, but unlike Milton's epic it can be understood everywhere, and has been translated into most tongues. Its real foundation is not a doctrinal system but a moral conception. Omit a few theological discussions, and it appeals to the Puritan of all creeds and all races. Everywhere the seeker after personal holiness or ideal perfection turns his face from his own home, and sets forth on the same journey : let others stay by their farm or their merchandise, he must follow the light which he sees, or thinks he sees ; happy if at last he beholds the shining spires of the city he travels to, glad if he catches by the way only a glimpse of the glory of it. Some may laugh at him as a fool, others may tell him there is no such city ; like Bunyan he heeds them not, but dreams his dream and holds it true.





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